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PREVENTION OF AN ARMS RACE IN OUTER SPACE

Report of the First Committee (Part XI)*

Rapporteur: Mr. Parfait-Serge ONANGA-ANYANGA (Gabon)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The First Committee considered agenda item 70 jointly with all the other items relating to disarmament and international security (for further details, see A/51/566). For the documents before the Committee under item 70, see A/51/566, paragraph 3.

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.1/51/L.43

2. At the 16th meeting of the Committee, on 6 November 1996, the representative of Egypt, on behalf of Algeria, Bolivia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" (A/C.1/51/L.43). Subsequently, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Cuba, India, Mongolia, Myanmar and Nigeria joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

3. At the 23rd meeting, on 14 November, the representative of Egypt orally revised the draft resolution by adding the words "including the weaponization of outer space" at the end of the thirteenth preambular paragraph.

* The reports of the Committee on all the agenda items relating to disarmament and international security (items 60, 61 and 63-81) will be issued under the symbol A/51/566 and addenda.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee voted on draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.43, as orally revised, as follows:

(a) The seventeenth preambular paragraph was adopted by a recorded vote of 85 to 1, with 39 abstentions. The voting was as follows:[1]

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

(b) Operative paragraph 6 was adopted by a recorded vote of 87 to 1, with 39 abstentions. The voting was as follows:[1]

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua,

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[1] The delegations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates subsequently indicated that they had intended to vote in favour.

Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

(c) Draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.43 as a whole was adopted by a recorded vote of 98 to none, with 40 abstentions (see para. 5). The voting was as follows:[2]

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania,

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[2] The delegations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar and Nigeria subsequently indicated that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

5. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Prevention of an arms race in outer space

The General Assembly,

Recognizing the common interest of all mankind in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Reaffirming the will of all States that the exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall be for peaceful purposes and shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development,

Reaffirming also provisions of articles III and IV of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,[3]

Recalling the obligation of all States to observe the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the use or threat of use of force in their international relations, including in their space activities,

Reaffirming further paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly[4] in which it is stated that in order to prevent an arms race in outer space further measures should be taken and appropriate international negotiations held in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty,

Recalling also its previous resolutions on this issue and taking note of the proposals submitted to the General Assembly at its tenth special session and at its regular sessions, and of the recommendation made to the competent organs of the United Nations and to the Conference on Disarmament,

Recognizing that prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security,

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[3] Resolution 2222 (XXI), annex.

[4] Resolution S-10/2.

Emphasizing the paramount importance of strict compliance with existing arms limitation and disarmament agreements relevant to outer space, including bilateral agreements, and with the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space,

Considering that wide participation in the legal regime applicable to outer space could contribute to enhancing its effectiveness,

Noting that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, taking into account its previous efforts since its establishment in 1985 and seeking to enhance its functioning in qualitative terms, continued the examination and identification of various issues, existing agreements and existing proposals, as well as future initiatives relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space[5] and that this contributed to a better understanding of a number of problems and to a clearer perception of the various positions,

Regretting the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in 1996,

Emphasizing the mutually complementary nature of bilateral and multilateral efforts in the field of preventing an arms race in outer space, and hoping that concrete results will emerge from those efforts as soon as possible,

Convinced that further measures should be examined in the search for effective and verifiable bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, including the weaponization of outer space,

Stressing that the growing use of outer space increases the need for greater transparency and better information on the part of the international community,

Recalling in this context its previous resolutions, in particular resolutions 45/55 B of 4 December 1990, 47/51 of 9 December 1992 and 48/74 A of 16 December 1993, in which, inter alia, it reaffirmed the importance of confidence-building measures as means conducive to ensuring the attainment of the objective of the prevention of an arms race in outer space,

Conscious of the benefits of confidence- and security-building measures in the military field,

Recognizing that the conclusion of an international agreement or agreements to prevent an arms race in outer space remains the fundamental task of the Ad Hoc Committee and that the concrete proposals on confidence-building measures could form an integral part of such agreements,

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[5] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 27 (A/49/27), sect. III.D (para. 5 of the quoted text).

1. Reaffirms the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space, and the readiness of all States to contribute to that common objective, in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies;[4]

2. Reaffirms its recognition, as stated in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, that the legal regime applicable to outer space by itself does not guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space, that this legal regime plays a significant role in the prevention of an arms race in that environment, that there is a need to consolidate and reinforce that regime and enhance its effectiveness, and that it is important strictly to comply with existing agreements, both bilateral and multilateral;

3. Emphasizes the necessity of further measures with appropriate and effective provisions for verification to prevent an arms race in outer space;

4. Calls upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation;

5. Reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects;

6. Requests the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee with a negotiating mandate at the beginning of its 1997 session, taking into account the work undertaken since 1985, with a view to conducting negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects;

7. Recognizes, in this respect, the growing convergence of views on the elaboration of measures designed to strengthen transparency, confidence and security in the peaceful uses of outer space;

8. Urges States conducting activities in outer space, as well as States interested in conducting such activities, to keep the Conference on Disarmament informed of the progress of bilateral or multilateral negotiations relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, if any, so as to facilitate its work;

9. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space".